



National Network of Parent Carer Forums
'Our Strength is our Shared Experience'

Engage Enable Empower



NNPCF Annual report 2018–19

October 2019

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Introduction and welcome

We are pleased to present the annual report for the National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF) for 2018–19.

It has been a difficult year for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The excitement of the Children and Families Act five years ago feels like a distant memory. Although there have been some successes, the requirements of the act have not been realised for too many of our children.

However, within this difficult environment, parent carer forums continue to show the way. When we asked our members to share the moments that they were most proud of, we were inundated with examples of improved services, empowered parents and better outcomes. Up and down the country, parent carer forums have driven change through championing true coproduction, joint working and person-centred services. Where the principles of the reforms are applied, parent carer forums have worked to deliver real change.

At the NNPCF we are committed to ensuring for these principles to be embedded at a national level. We have worked with government departments and the NHS to promote the importance of cross governmental working and coproduction. Our involvement in the new SEND system implementation board set up by the department for Education and the work outlined in the NHS Long Term Plan bear testimony to this.

Our report sets out the work we have done listening to our members and then representing their views on the regional and national stage.

Throughout all of this, our membership has continued to work tirelessly to be the voice of parent carers to those who deliver and commission services and create policy and law. The commitment, knowledge and passion of our members is the foundation of the NNPCF and is recognized by the Department for Education and the entire SEND sector. Despite the challenges they face on a day to day basis their determination to improve the lives of all children with SEND is what drives the movement forward.

Maureen Morris and Mrunal Sisodia

NNPCF Co-chairs 2018–19



A snapshot of the year








“As members of the NNPCF we know that we are not a lone voice. Reaching out to other members means we have a fantastic resource at our fingertips. It increases our knowledge and confidence meaning we can work with our partners on an equal basis”




Sunderland PCF

* We have seen a small drop in forum membership since last as a result of the data clean-up following the implementation of GDPR. Following this, forums are reporting that their membership has continued to rise as new members are attracted and old members removed from our data lists ask to be added again.

We have achieved a lot...

-  Our messages that the SEND system and schools need more money has been heard with an extra £700m for SEND announced by the Chancellor in September.
-  We have been arguing that the sector needs more senior, cross governmental leadership and priority. As a result, the SEND system leadership board has been set up and review of the SEND system has been announced by the government.
-  The voice of our members has been heard in key investigations into SEND. The NNPCF gave evidence to the Education Select Committee and the National Audit Office Inquiries.
-  We worked with Ofsted to share the stories of children with SEND in mainstream schools and the new Ofsted school inspection framework places much greater emphasis on schools being inclusive.
-  We have championed co-production with a wider group of partners than ever before. During the year NNPCF representatives worked with organisation such as NASEN, the Local Government Association, the Association of Directors of Children’s Services and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists to promote coproduction with families and parent carer forums.

...but many challenges remain.

-  Our members tell us that the experience of children with SEND in mainstream schools remains poor for too many families with off-rolling, exclusions, part-time timetables all too common and access to early help often very difficult.
-  Our membership continue to have concerns about the quality of EHCPs, particularly the input from health and social care services. Too often, parents tell us that the provision that is written into plans, is not being delivered.
-  Parents still describe their children reaching school leaving age as the “cliff edge”. Forums report that opportunities for employment, community inclusion and independent living are very limited.

Our work



"Being part of the NNPCF gives our forum steering group & members the security and knowledge that they are part of a much wider community. It helps the forum show that their contributions 'matter' as a part of that wider process as it feeds into the national agenda and helps orchestrate real change"

North Tyneside PCF Newcastle PCF

Listening to our membership

The lived experiences of our members form the basis of everything we do. We use a variety of means to listen to our membership.

- **Attended over 100 regional meetings and events**
- **conducted three member surveys**
- **sought feedback on 7 consultations and calls for evidence**

Over the course of the year the steering group and national representatives have:

- **learnt from 1,000 posts and 6,000 comments on our social media pages for forums**
- **held a two-day national conference attended by 200 representative delegates**
- **As well as talking, face to face, with thousands of parent carers**

What are we hearing?

Children and young people with SEN in mainstream

The experience of children and young people with SEND in mainstream schools is the single biggest issue raised by our members over the last year. There is an uneven pattern of support, delivery and provision meaning that too many children with SEN in mainstream schools are being let down:

- There is a move away from children with SEND being educated in mainstream schools with increasing numbers being placed in specialist provision. Official Department for Education statistics show an increase in exclusions for children with SEND and an increase in the proportion of children with SEND attend specialist provisions.
- A disproportionate number of children with SEND are being excluded either officially or unofficially. In an NNPCF survey, 95% of forums were aware of children and young people with SEND in their Local Authority that have been excluded from school. Forums also report a worrying increase in off-rolling and unofficial exclusions (e.g. part time timetables, missing certain school activities, encouragement to be home schooled, isolation).
- Early help is often not easily available and many parents report that schools and local authorities will only act when there is evidence that their child is

failing and has reached crisis point. There is a clear perception that financial constraints mean that services are rationed. This is amplified by the lack of transparency on funding for children with SEND in mainstream schools.

It is now five years since the Children and Families Act became law, in that time tens of thousands of children have left the school system without the reforms having changed their experience and outcomes.

Education health and care plans and annual reviews

The quality of plans remains a key focus. Many forums have concerns that the quality of plans has been sacrificed to meet the conversion deadline of March 2018. The quality of advice and input from Health and Social care providers remains a concern and many forums report that all too often the provision that has been written into a plan (for example, therapy services) is simply not being delivered. Data from the national trial of a single route of redress (SEND tribunals) shows often different parts of local authorities (education and social care) are often in disagreement whilst children and families suffer.

However, where families have good quality EHCPs they report that these do make a difference to their child achieving their outcomes.

Preparing for adulthood

Families describe their young people approaching school leaving age as “the cliff edge”. Upon leaving school, the offer from many local areas is not clear. Families are unable to see how the services and provision available will deliver the best possible outcomes for their young people. Part time education provision for their young person (often only 3 days a week) is a major concern. Families report that frequently that there is no or inadequate provision on offer for the other days. For some families this can result in parents having to stop or reduce paid employment.

Parent carer forums report that opportunities for employment, community inclusion and independent living are very limited.

Families are often thought to be behaving “irrationally” when insisting on young people remaining in education post 19. In the absence of a meaningful alternative, families will fight to hang onto what they know works.

Financial constraints on local areas

We have seen an increase in concerns from forums that their local areas cannot deliver the legal requirements of the Children and Families Act with constrained resources. The demand and scope of services for SEND is increasing at a time when local authority finances are under ever increasing pressure (for example the number of EHCPS and statements have grown by 82,000 to 320,000 between 2014 and 2018).

In a recent NNPCF survey, 94% of parent carer forums that responded stated that they did not think there was enough funding in the high needs funding block to meet local needs.

In addition, the failure of many areas to make meaningful progress with joint commissioning has amplified this situation. What resources there are have not always been deployed in the most effective ways. In our survey only a third of forums said they thought that their local area had an excellent or good understanding of the needs of their local SEND population whilst two thirds thought the understanding was fair or poor. Leading on from this, only 12% of parent carer forums said that they thought the distribution of funding to meet local need was excellent or good. Sadly, too many local areas continue to provide services that are “commissioner led” rather than needs led. Budgetary constraints and available provision drive services rather than the needs of families.

Incentives for school leaders

Our membership reports that mainstream schools are becoming less inclusive. Currently, school leaders are not sufficiently incentivised to adopt inclusive practices. For example:

- The old Ofsted inspection framework was very academically focused. The new inspection framework goes some way to addressing this.
- School success measures (e.g. Progress 8) remain academically focused
- The national curriculum and further education courses have narrowed in the last 10 years

All of this means that many schools do not take a holistic, graduated approach to SEND. Those that do, rapidly become “SEND magnets” as parents of children with SEND recognise their inclusive approach and flock to them.

Accountability

There are few hard-hitting measures that local authorities can take if schools are not adopting an inclusive approach. The fragmentation of the school system over the last decade means that local authorities have only limited levers to change the behaviour of schools (especially academies) and local services.

Low prioritisation of SEND across health and social care

SEND is not a high priority for most local social care teams or many clinical commissioning groups. This means that many local social care and health commissioners have not focused on the requirements of the SEND reforms:

- Many practitioners are not aware of their responsibilities under the Children and Families Act
- Families report shortages of key services (e.g. long waits for ASD diagnosis and services, speech and language therapy)
- Carers assessments are often not carried out resulting in more families in crisis.
- Services are not delivered in the joined-up way required.

Our priorities

Having heard and understood what our members are telling us, we work with our local forums and regional networks to create a national picture of the issues, themes and priorities of children and young people with SEND and their families.

For 2018–19 we identified the following priorities for the NNPCF. We review these priorities on an ongoing basis and review them each year to reflect the messages we are hearing from our membership.

1 Co-production

- Work to embed the culture and practice of co-production with our partners and champion coproduction at a local, regional and national level. Develop all of our key strategies and policies in co-production with our member forums

2 Effective services for children and families

- Education Health and Care Plans
- SEN Support
- Preparing for Adulthood
- Joint commissioning
- Transport
- Local Area Inspections
- Engagement with Health
- Short breaks
- CAMHS

3 Build the capability, sustainability and capacity of forums

- Continue to grow our membership
- Ensure strong regional networks
- Manage the NNPCF effectively

In addition, in order to inform and empower individual parents and local forums, working with our membership we have developed a number of 'talking points'. Each talking point has been created using a range of engagement methods. Our 'talking points' summarise the lived experience of our members about the topic; what is working and what is not working; and what we would like to see changed.

During the year we have produced talking points on:

- Joint Working
- SEN Support
- School Inspections
- SEND Local Area Inspections
- SEND Resourcing
- Short Breaks

For a full list of our talking points see our website www.nnpcf.org.uk/about-the-nnpcf/talking-points/

Our partners

Our team of National Representatives works with our partners, to ensure that they understand the lived experience of families of children and young people with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND). Our national representatives are all parents and carers of children and young people with SEND and active in their local forums. They put forward what we hear from forums in a direct, honest and authentic way.

To learn more about our team of National Representatives, please take a look at our website www.nnpcf.org.uk/about-the-nnpcf/nnpcf-national-reps/

The National Representatives work with our partners in a range of ways that includes:

- Raising specific issues with them as they arise
- Having places on boards and governance bodies of relevant groups, organisations and projects
- Responding to formal consultations on behalf of our members
- Participating in specific projects, investigations and reports
- Meeting face to face and corresponding with our partners.

Our responses to formal consultations and inquiries also forms an important way of getting our messages across. Over the course of the year, we have represented the views of our membership in numerous consultations, including:

- Commons Education Select Committee SEND Inquiry
- National Audit Office Inquiry of SEN and Funding
- Reviewing the outcomes and support of Children in Need
- Post 18 Education Call for Evidence
- School Exclusions Review Response
- Independent Advice & Support Minimum Standards
- NICE Quality Standards: Service Model for people with learning disabilities and behaviours that challenges

All our consultation responses are published on our website

www.nnpcf.org.uk/get-involved/consultations/

“London Councils makes the case to government and others to get the best deal for Londoners and to ensure that our member authorities have the resources, freedoms and powers to do the best possible job for their residents and local businesses. We have had the privilege of working with representatives from the London NNPCF on our strategy work for children and young people with SEND. The expertise and insight that NNPCF representatives have brought to this work has been invaluable in shaping our messages to government and our work with boroughs to help improve services.”

Yolande Burgess, Strategy Director, London Councils

Preparing for Adulthood / Employment

- Department of Work and Pensions
- British Association of Supported Employment
- Preparing for Adulthood

Accountability

- Ofsted
- Care Quality Commission
- Tribunal Judges
- Independent Advice and Support Programme
- National Audit Office

We have worked with a wide range of partners across a variety of areas and sectors to get our messages across

The SEND sector

- Council for Disabled Children
- Contact
- National Development Team for Inclusion
- KIDS

Local Government

- Local Government Association
- Association of Directors of Children's Services
- Association of Directors of Adult Services
- Devolved Government (London Assembly and Greater Manchester)

Education

- Department for Education
- NASEN
- National SENCO forum
- Mott MacDonald
- Delivering Better Outcomes Together consortium

Policy and influencing

- Special Educational Consortium
- National SEND Forum
- Health Policy Influencing Group
- Children's Commissioner
- Disabled Children's Partnership

Feedback

During what has been a difficult year for families living with SEND and parent carer forums, we have made some important progress working with the wider SEND sector.

Funding

Most importantly, the Department for Education has understood that if it is to deliver on the requirements of the Children and Families Act, it must put more money into the system. In the comprehensive spending review in September, the Chancellor announced an extra £700m for SEND. We will seek to work with the Department for Education to ensure that this extra money is spent effectively at a national and local level.

The inspection framework

We worked closely with Ofsted ahead of the launch of the new school inspection framework which came into effect this September, including hosting a roundtable so that inspectors could hear, first hand, the often distressing and unlawful experiences of children with SEND in mainstream schools. The new inspection framework requires school leaders to be inclusive and places great emphasis on the Equalities Act 2010.

In response to demands from the sector including the NNPCF, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission launched a series of re-visits to local areas that have received a written statement of action (WSOA) in their local area SEND inspection. These revisits have been thorough with many areas found wanting and the NNPCF is calling for strong action from the DfE and NHS England for those areas that have failed their re-visits.

The NHS Long Term Plan

In January, the NHS launched the Long Term Plan. There is much in the plan that is good and necessary for children and young people in SEND including specific promises for children with learning difficulties and Autism and commitments on child and adolescent mental health services.

We also worked very hard to make sure that NHS England set up a specific workstream for SEND under the plan.

The growing influence of the parent carer voice

The influence and strength of the parent carer forum movement is growing. During 2018-19, your voice has been represented with more and more organisations that deliver and commission services for our children. In particular, the NNPCF had built strong links with local government bodies such as the Association of Directors of Children's Services and the Local Government Association and have attended board meetings at both organisations. Our influence with the Department of Work and Pensions continues to grow.

We have been involved in developing their policies around getting disabled people into work.

Our growing influence is evident in our appointment to the SEND System Leadership Board from the Department for Education and the Children and Young People's stakeholder Council for the NHS Long Term Plan. The SEND review announced in September marks another opportunity for the parental voice to be heard.

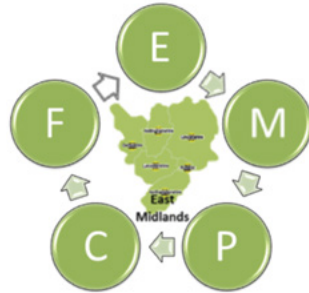
"NNPCF enables us to feel empowered by giving us the same access to information as our Local Authority and Health"

Newcastle PCF

Regional Reports

East Midlands

The past year has been a very busy one for all of the Parent Carers Forums of the East Midlands Region.



Whilst individual PCFs have been working with their local areas in managing activities as diverse as reconstructing their SEND systems following a Written Statement of Action, or for one PCF, dealing with the financial constraints of an area teetering on the verge of insolvency; another began working with its PCF on completely overhauling their schools spending and special education provision following a peer review that found serious flaws in the areas understanding of itself and its engagement with parent carers – to it then becoming not only one of the few areas that escaped a Written Statement of Action in the later rounds of Ofsted/CQC Inspections, but to its being held up nationally as an example of how a local area working together in coproduction with its PCF, can really help to solve some of the biggest issues that local areas face.

The Local Area Peer Reviews, which started a few years back in the East Midlands, now has a large team of experienced and well-trained parent carers capable of participating in the reviews, and it goes without saying that this has not only greatly assisted the parent carers involved in assessing the issues faced in their own areas, but has also helped those new to participating in their PCF and the regional forum, to quickly get up to speed on the best ways to develop their own engagement and build their platforms for change.

All of the regions PCFs have benefited from the knowledge and support gained by sharing each other’s practices at the termly regional meetings, and this year has again seen some of the region’s PCFs continuing to manage changes amongst their individual Steering Groups alongside increasing requests for their engagement in developing relationships with their area’s partners in SEND.

Dave Nutting, East Midlands Steering Group Member

East of England

It continues to be a difficult environment for children and young people with SEND and their families in the East of England. At time of writing, eight of the eleven areas in the East of England have had their local area SEND inspections and six of these have received a written statement of action. In these trying times, I am immensely proud of the work that the forums in the region are doing to understand and represent the voices of families with SEND, something that the inspectors have often commented on. I too have witnessed it when I have had the pleasure of attending local meetings and conferences in Norfolk, Essex, Cambridge and Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough.



Not only are the forums supporting their own local communities, they have also worked to support one another. Forums have been generous with their time and knowledge, offering peer to peer support and regional workshops to share their expertise. In addition, regional training days have been well attended and appreciated including a session on SEND decision making and the law from IPSEA.

The spirit of coproduction is alive and well in the regional peer network with all partners talking about a four-way partnership between Education, Health, Social Care and Parents.

However, there is no time for complacency. There are issues everywhere like in Suffolk where mental health services continue to be in crisis, and in Hertfordshire where the Nascot Lawn families are still seeking redress. In addition, many forums are facing criticism from campaign groups. In these circumstances, it is more important that ever that parent carer forums work together to make sure that policy makers hear what is wrong but also have someone to work with to build better services.

Mrunal Sisodia, East of England Steering Group Member

Regional Reports (cont)

London

It has been another extremely busy year for the London region with seven forums participating in the SEND Local Area Inspections. A special mention to ParentsActive (Hammersmith and Fulham) where the inspectors commented: “Leaders have successfully implemented a strong culture of co-production. This important change in culture means that implementation of the reforms is carried out ‘with’ and not ‘to’ users”.

This is coproduction and something that we all strive to achieve in the London region!

We continue to enjoy meaningful engagement through the SEND Regional Lead programme and London Strategic Managers and Parent Carer Network. We have an excellent relationship with the Peer Network and are represented as an equal partner on both steering groups. During the past year we have been working with colleagues from across Education, Health, Social Care and sector partners to develop a sustainable SEND network for the London region. This has included exploring developing an accountability and governance structure under ALDCS.

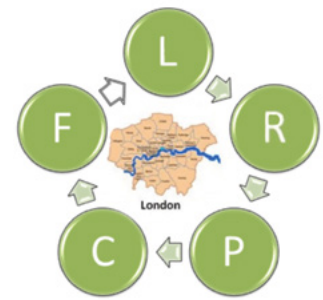
As a region we continue to work with colleagues from NHS England to influence the Transforming Care programme and Sustainability and Transformation plans.

The regional cluster groups continue to work well, with good attendance at the termly meetings, they offer invaluable peer to peer support, information and an opportunity to share.

We hosted a London Wide Event in the spring term at the London Councils, who are a valued partner to the London region. This session, facilitated by IPSEA was arranged in response to requests from our forums to be ‘upskilled’ and informed in terms of decision making and the law.

Our strength is our shared experience. As a region our strength is based upon our member forums who have undertaken some amazing work and making a real difference. 2018-19 has seen a number of the London

forums celebrating ten years of parent participation in their Local Areas. We would like to thank each and every forum and those parents who have consistently been there for their local SEND families and who gave so much of their time to the work of forums across London.



Kay Moore and Fazilla Amide, London Steering Group Members

North East and Cumbria

This year has been a very busy year for the NE and Cumbria. We have been involved in a large project with Transforming Care in the south of the region and north Cumbria which has benefited the whole region but has involved a lot of work.



This project was to link in with mainstream schools in an area and the forums received additional funding to help with this from North region Transforming Care. The project has received a lot of attention from NHSE and we currently have an outstanding bid to roll out the project in the north of the region and to extend it in the south. The outcomes to increase awareness of the needs of those CYP with LD and/or Autism in a mainstream setting have been very promising so far with schools, young people and families all reporting satisfaction and there has been some pleasing results regarding a marked decrease in exclusions.

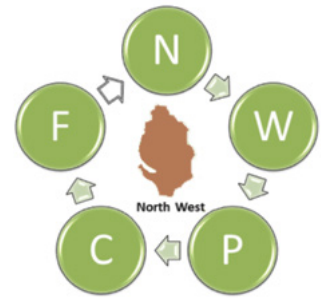
We have had a very high number of Local Area Inspections with only 2 out of the 13 areas not being inspected to date. Of the 11 who have been inspected only one has not had a WSOA. One forum has been involved in a re-visit. This has had a considerable impact on the forums in terms of capacity and resources.

However with the additional funding from Transforming Care we have been able to offer all forums training and some resources. We now have a number of regional reps trained and have a strong family feel across the region. Cluster meetings are well attended as is our annual regional conference. In addition to our pcf regional meetings we also have themed CYP Peer network meetings attended by pcfs and professionals from LAs and CCGs.

Maureen Morris, North East and Cumbria Steering Group Member

North West

2018-2019 has been a busy year for the North West Region. After setting up a regional structure in 2017, we have reflected on that work that has happened since it was put into place and importantly, our mandate and priorities have been set by the region. The structure has allowed us to share more knowledge around the region to a wider group with 19 out of 23 forums engaging with regional workshops such as IPSEA training, the SEND IAS lead coming to share their knowledge but most of all it has been great to see so many new faces at our regional events.



We have reflected that there are four factors that have supported our regional work:

- that our SG is elected by the region through a voting system,
- we are more transparent,
- having a central contact to support our social media as well as dealing with queries on behalf of the region and
- Keeping in Touch(KiT) meeting allows for the steering group to plan and develop future events.

The forums in the region have been heavily involved with the SEND Inspections and the revisits that followed for many of us. This has generated a huge amount of work and effort to be a sincere challenge to our areas but also to work in co-production. The SEND Network have championed local peer inspections and we are proud that parent/carer representatives will be on the inspection teams as experts by experience.

Our forums continue to be independent and vocal groups within their areas and we celebrate this. We continue to develop as a region whilst embracing the devolution in Greater Manchester and navigating what this looks like for those ten forums and their memberships. Exciting times.

Kath Bromfield, North West Steering Group Member

Regional Reports (cont)

South East

One of the biggest successes for the South East region was the coming together as a collective to respond to the request for evidence for the Education

Select Committee. The South East is divided into two different cluster groups, with a combined total of 19 local areas, and both cluster groups felt that they wanted to respond as individual PCFs, but also input into the NNPCF response as a region. Over two cluster meetings both were asked the same questions and shared their collective responses as evidence. It has been reflected that working together as a region to deliver this evidence was an important reminder of why we need to work as a collective within the regions.

We have made some changes to our internal structure, such as having an administrator to support our regional structure, and we purchased “GoToMeeting” software which has allowed the region work to be supported in a virtual way, as well as the software being accessed by local PCFs so they can use it to support their own engagement work.

We have also delivered training to develop the skills of our regional cluster reps, and to support our regional work with the SE19 SEND Peer Network, ensuring the voice of PCFs at regional events and activities such as SE19 Regional Steering Group or co-chairing SE19 Strategic Coproduction Participation Group can continue.

Once again, we came together for our yearly gathering, bringing together both clusters to reflect on highlights for each area, but also to plan what the region needs for the up and coming year.

Finally, I would like to thank the region for their hard work and commitment towards the region and look forward to seeing how the region goes forward in these challenging times.

Lara Roberts, South East Steering Group Member



South West

This year has been amazing, and we have worked hard for it to be so. The region as a whole are working together, sharing information and what's working well, saving forums time money and energy not recreating the wheel!

Our regional FB closed group has worked really well and Ruth and Kay as admins have done a great job, thank you ladies.

Cluster meetings have been an issue, since more forums are now doing more work as part of the Local Area Inspections, in particular those who have received a written statement of action in their areas.

The region has decided on a new structure, which will mean less cluster meetings with more training and guest speakers.

Forums in the south west have been dealing with campaigning groups in a way that shows strength and purpose.

We are now doing more work as a region with the health. Forums have changed the way that Health were looking to commission Tier 4 acute beds for young people with M H needs. For the first time, they are saying that the parent carer voice is important and that makes me incredibly proud, as we weren't even at the table last year.

We lost Bournemouth forum that was, due to the Local Authorities amalgamation, which came into force on 1st April 2019. We want to thank Marion and her team for all their hard work, we welcome the new area, which covers Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch is now being managed by a new forum called Parent Carers Together.

We are becoming a strong region, with forums being recognised at a government level for their hard work in co-production and engagement. It makes me so proud to be a small part of it, in highlighting the excellent work that they are doing.

Tina Emery, South West Steering Group Member



West Midlands

The West Midlands has continued to see some challenges throughout the year. We have seen many forums identify health engagement to still be limited to DCO/DMO with little engagement from the CCG or those with financial decision making responsibility. To help our regional forums combat this area of concern we held a training day to explore every areas health map identifying who were the key people in their area to engage with, what work streams have been ongoing, and the local health teams priorities and objectives impacting on SEND families.



We have also seen challenges across the PFA sectors for some forums but have been delighted to see an increase in activity within the region from NDTis PFA team to support local authorities and health teams to understand and improve their local services and post 16 provision. This has been very valuable with events being hugely successful in engaging colleges and transition teams. Forums have been extremely pleased to see the interest in this area grow this year.

There have been some great successes across the West Midlands this year. Wolverhampton have moved away from their hosts becoming more independent. Telford and Wrekin have expanded their support and participation offers. Birmingham and Solihul have continued to grow and be successful. And many forums have strengthened their relationships locally.

Moving forward into 2019/2020 we are prioritising training and support for our regional forums. This means that we will be securing two specific training sessions to develop our skills and knowledge, initially exploring steering group member resilience.

We will also be inviting regional leads to come into the region regularly to update us on activities and actions, as well as providing forums an opportunity to directly inform and influence the areas they represent.

We have also earmarked an autumn conference we wish to run with the aim of hosting a coproduction event that truly demonstrates how coproduction can make real and sustainable change with forums at the heart of the process.

Zara Bowden, West Midlands Steering Group Member

Yorkshire and Humber

A very busy year for the region both in terms of responding to service changes and more parent carers joining forum's.



There have been some great examples of individual forum work and working in partnership with health and the local authority, this included in one area the drawing up a co-production charter which has been well received across health, education and social care and with families and subsequently had a positive mention in their local area inspection. Other areas have made a great effort to help health services better understand the needs of families by holding 'health fun events' which were very well attended and has enabled a better working relationship and insight that has improved planning and design of services.

Sadly, the impact of reduced budgets and staff moving and shuffling is something mentioned across all forums and the disruption this has caused to service delivery and the quality of services. Other challenges have been with capacity, most recently relating to a greater amount of time being devoted to children who are not in education, such as, off rolling and exclusions. Quite a few forums are still experiencing difficulties in waiting lists for ASD and lack of SEN support in schools.

The region meets often to share information and support each other and this consistent opportunity has been a crucial part of building a more sustainable network and membership which continues to get stronger together.

Julie Bruce, Yorkshire and Humber Steering Group Member

Looking forward

Since the end of March, a huge amount has happened in the world of SEND.

In the comprehensive spending review in September, the Chancellor announced an additional £700m for SEND. At the same time, the Department for Education launched a new cross governmental “five years on” review of the SEND system and the national audit office published its report into the funding of the SEND system.

This is on top of the SEND system leadership board, the NHS Long Term Plan and the review of the SEND Code of Practice announced in the wake of the Timpson review into school exclusions. Finally, at time of writing, we are still waiting for the publication of Education Select Committee report into SEND

These changes point to a greater awareness of the issues our children and families are facing and a growing desire to work together across the system. However, these initiatives are still in their infancy. They are a great opportunity for the NNPCF and parent carer forums to coproduce the improvements to services that our children so desperately need.

The passion, knowledge and experience of parent carer forums will be key to their success. We will continue to work tirelessly to make sure that the voice of parent carers is heard.

NNPCF steering group







National Network of Parent Carer Forums
'Our Strength is our Shared Experience'

contact

For families with disabled children

National Network of Parent Carer Forums

-  www.nnpf.org.uk
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For advice and information please call the freephone helpline from Monday to Friday (09:30 – 17:00) on **0808 808 3555**

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